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THE U.S. AND ANTI-PIRACY EFFORTS: NEW RESULTS, BUT VIOLENCE PERSISTS

The photo shows a young Vietnamese woman grimly pointing toward a row of six Thai, each with a sullen expression.

In one sense, her situation is old news. Like the victims of more than 2,000 other such reported crimes, according to statistics obtained from the U.S. State Department, the woman was abducted and raped by pirates--for the most part, rogue Thai fishermen who prey upon Vietnamese boat people.

What sets her apart, however, is that she was searched for and found by Thai police, and, in the snapshot, she is identifying her attackers.

"That wouldn't have been possible months ago," a Department official said of the woman's recovery and her role in bringing her attackers to justice.

The source, who discussed U.S. anti-piracy activity in general on the grounds that he remain anonymous, suggested that the photo represents the first fruit of a special U.S.-Thai program begun in October.

The bilateral effort is one of the latest official attempts to stop the murders, rapes, robberies, and abductions that have been the pirates' calling cards since boat people started leaving Vietnam eleven years ago.

Thousands of lives lost and damaged, millions of dollars spent, and several official declarations later, the results are mixed, partly, critics say, because the United States is not pressuring Thailand sufficiently for prosecutions.

As yet unavailable statistics for the first quarter of 1986 reportedly show an improved piracy picture, but an official in Southeast Asia knowledgeable about the piracy problem warned against attributing it to any anti-piracy measure.

"There's no way to establish a conclusive link," he said.

Attacks Still High off Southern Thailand Attacks against boat people have declined. For example, State Department statistics indicate that 25 percent of the 257 boats that landed in Thailand last year were attacked. Those boats carried 3,322 people. The

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previous year, when 181 boats with 3,036 passengers landed, the percentage attacked was 11 points higher.

Yet, such numbers can be misleading, according to sources, because they mask the situation off southern Thailand, long the area of the most intense piracy. Nearly 70 percent of the 59 boats that landed there last year were hit by pirates, and the attacks were deadly.

"It was one of the worst years for violence," the official in Southeast Asia said.

Rapes of young women were at their highest level in years, and pirates rammed eleven boats. Fifty boat people lost their lives in one attack alone in December.

Apprehensions By Land Police Stressed

According to the State Department official, the U.S.-Thai effort begun last fall is the one that stands the best chance of further reducing attacks.

Paid for with $205,000 in U.S. funds, the program is designed to apprehend pirates and recover victims through police work on land.

With that end in mind, U.S. officials have been conducting training sessions for Thai authorities in "fundamentals of modern police work," according to the State Department source, some of which, he explained, are related to gathering evidence against suspects. Through this program, he added, Thailand and Malaysia have been encouraged to cooperate, and Thai officials are now able to visit boat people who have landed in Malaysia to hear their complaints about Thai suspects.

Recently, arrests have risen. So far this year, for example, Thai police have taken ten suspects into custody, an amount equal to a whole year's arrests in the past.

And, there have been other signs of progress, according to sources. Last month, Thai authorities started pasting bright red anti-piracy stickers to the hulls of boats and walls of bordellos and police stations. The stickers declare, "Piracy Is an Affront to the Thai People," and show a phone number to be called should an attack, suspect, or victim be spotted.

The State Department official said, though, that the message the stickers bear is not what matters most.

"It's the first time they have admitted that their citizens are involved in the attacks," he said of the role the authorities have taken.

He added, "No matter what resources you provide, you'd get nowhere without the cooperation of local Thai authorities. They are working with us beautifully. Without them, you could put up a zillion dollars a day and get nothing."

U.S. Anti-Piracy Funds in the Millions

Actually, millions have been provided. Congress earmarked nearly $12 million for anti-piracy measures over a three-year period that will end in September.

U.S. officials have used the money partly to set up a special anti-piracy unit in the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok. Five people staff the section: Harold Lierly, a former U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency official, runs it and enjoys a reputation for commitment and hard work; Lierly is assisted by a full-time consultant. Three embassy staff work on the issue part-time, too.

All, according to the source, divide their time between Bangkok and Songkhla, a southern Thai coastal city near the sites of boat landings. A U.S. consular officer based in Songkhla is also involved part-time, though he is not part of the unit.

Meanwhile, in Washington, Michael D. Metelits of the State Department's Bureau for Refugee Programs works solely on the piracy issue. The position was made permanent when Metelits assumed the post last fall. Previously, consultants or staff split their time between piracy and other concerns.

The U.S.-Thai program that these people focus on was conceived to bolster another effort, a four-year-old UNHCR-administered anti-piracy program. The United States is the largest contributor to that arrangement, in which 11 nations participate; the U.S. donation of $1 million for this year is paying for 41 percent of the current program.

Originally, the UNHCR program emphasized sea surveillance by Thai navy planes and ships, an approach that was questioned in a 1983 review by a team of international experts. Since then, anti-piracy activities on land have received more emphasis.

Last year, according to UNHCR, the proportion of boat refugees who were rescued nearly doubled after years of declining; 2,818 refugees were saved by passing ships, or 15 percent of the total number who arrived in Southeast Asia in 1985.

Sea Patrols Face Difficulties Sea patrols continue, however, and they have run into some new problems. For example, according to the State Department source, statistics indicate that a strip of the Gulf of Thailand claimed by Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam is the area where most of the attacks took place last year.

But, even though the strip has been identified, Thai patrol craft won't enter it, the source said, because it is disputed and Thailand does not want to risk confrontations with other claimants to the area.

Still, plans to bolster sea suveillance move forward. More than $260,000, for example, are expected to be spent from UNHCR anti-piracy program funds to upgrade an airport outside of Songkhla.

The upgrading, which is not expected to be completed for two years, is believed to be necessary because planes currently cannot take off and land at the facility at dawn and dusk, times when piracy attacks are likely. The improvement will include the installation of control tower lights, paid for with $107,000 from U.S. contributions to the UNHCR program.

Although the United States is going along with such steps, American officials do not believe that sea surveillance will solve the piracy. "Most people think there is a smoking pistol, that you can catch people in the act," the State Department source said. "There are other things [such

While many dispute the claim, the State Department, in its 1985 World Refugee Report to Congress, singled out the Orderly Departure Program (ODP) as "an alternative to the dangerous and disorderly escapes in small boats." But the chances of many Vietnamese to leave Vietnam legally through ODP looked slim in mid-April.

Vietnam and the the United States still disagreed about a "backlog" of people who have been given exit visas by the government of Vietnam so that they can leave via the program (Refugee Reports, Vol. VII No. 1). Hence, Vietnam continued its suspension of granting visas. The suspension, which began January 1, was discussed during an early March meeting between Vietnamese and U.S. officials, but that session did not resolve matters. In light of the unchanged and prolonged nature of the situation, one diplomatic source described the outlook for the ODP program as "not brilliant."

Since the suspension took effect, ODP monthly departures for the United States have fallen by 30 percent, according to the State Department. Some flights that would have carried people bound for Australia and Canada were cancelled last month, but according to Donald Ellson, the State Department official who oversees the ODP program, there were no plans to cancel flights scheduled to bear passengers destined for the United States. Ellson said, however, that the numbers of such emigres are expected "to drop off soon."

According to a former program interviewer who has followed developments closely, recent ODP arrivals in Bangkok have consistently reported that Vietnam is recalling exit visas already issued.

"If there is a recall," he said, "it's a sign that the Vietnamese consider ODP to be ended."

Vietnam was said to have successfully encouraged one 13-year-old boy "to stay and build his country." He added that the child had sought to rejoin his parents in Norway, which is reportedly making the boy's case an item of special concern.

However, Nguyen Dang Quang, Vietnam's first secretary to the United Nations in New York, said he had "no information" about a recall of exit visas. Asked if that meant his government was not taking back visas, Nguyen replied, "I think so."

Meanwhile, U.S. and UN sources said they knew nothing about such a development. But the former ODP interviewer cautioned that official notice of a recall should not be expected. "I'd be surprised if there was anything," he said, noting that Vietnam originally communicated its plans for an ODP moratorium unofficially and in an understated fashion.

Since the ODP moratorium came about, there has been little change in boat departures from Vietnam. In January and February, 2,580 boat people landed in asylum countries of Southeast Asia, or 10 fewer than in the same months a year earlier. However, sources say, it may be too soon to detect any effect the ODP situation may have on illegal boat escapes.

as the new Thai-U.S. program] that you can do that are far more promising."

Active Congressional Interest Lacking One who is reported to be unhappy with the airport improvement plan is Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.), the Congressman who led the effort to get federal funds earmarked for anti-piracy measures.

"He thinks it's a stupid idea," a source close to Solarz said, adding that the extra flying time the improvement would permit would have a negligible effect on anti-piracy efforts.

These days, though, Solarz, chairman of the House Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, has a limited amount of time to make his dissatisfaction known. Developments in the Philippines have "consumed" his office recently, according to the spokesperson, and it is unlikely that other lawmakers are filling the void.

Indeed, in recent years, piracy attacks against boat people have generated little interest on Capitol Hill--the last congressional hearing exclusively devoted to them was held four years ago this month, and there have been suggestions that legislators' lack of interest is part of the reason anti-piracy measures have not been very effective.

"Nothing's going to change unless 20 Congressmen are banging on our door asking us to do something," a State Department source who formerly worked on the issue once said.

"Mercy Ship" Sails the Gulf Interest is strong in at least one quarter, though. SOS Boat People, a refugee group in San Diego, is helping to sponsor the sailing of the Regina II, a German "mercy ship," on the Gulf of Thailand as an a answer to piracy.

Privately funded by European and U.S. groups, the Regina II costs $4,000 to $5,000 per day to operate. The ship entered the Gulf in March, and had rescued 316 boat people within one month. It is expected to sail for four months. Last year, another ship, the Jean Charcot, saved 525 people in the Gulf of Thailand during May.

U.S. officials frown upon vessels which are used exclusively for such purposes, viewing them as "pull factors" that attract boat people and expose them to attacks. Also, the ships are seen as expensive but superficial solutions.

But Nguyen Xuu Xuong, SOS director, disagrees. "They aren't superficial to the people who have been rescued," Nguyen said, implying that boat people cannot be "pulled" from Vietnam immediately by a mercy ship sailing in the region for a short time because their escapes "take three to six months to plan."

The SOS director questioned the way U.S. anti-piracy funds generally have been spent. "The Thai have received millions," he said, "but things are still not much better."

He added that the United States is afraid to pressure Thailand for results because it fears alienating a trusted and treasured ally in Southeast Asia; moreover, according to Nguyen, Thailand is insincere about fighting piracy because it deters the arrival of boat refugees, people long unwanted by Thai authorities.

Anti-Piracy Information Scarce At some point, regular reports on the activities of the Embassy's anti-piracy unit may be available to the public. The State Department has suggested them, according to the source, but he questioned whether the unit can take on "another reporting load."

If such information did become available, it would fill a considerable void. Now, the only statistics available from U.S. officials in Washington are those on piracy attacks themselves; and they are based upon information supplied by UNHCR.

Information on U.S. efforts to combat piracy remains difficult to obtain. For example, the State Department source turned down requests for written information on the following: the findings of consultants who have studied the piracy attacks; the spending plan for U.S. anti-piracy funds and the activities undertaken since Congress first earmarked the money three years ago; and the way in which the U.S. contribution to the UNHCR anti-piracy program is being spent.

The requests were said to be either confidential, inappropriate, or, in the case of previous spending, hard to satisfy since now-departed officials were in charge of the funds.

Future Funding Uncertain How long money will be available for the anti-piracy program is another question for which there

seems to be no answer now. According to the source, the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings budget law could curtail U.S. anti-piracy spending, but it is too early to know that for sure. He said, though, that the United States would like to increase slightly its contribution to the UNCHR anti-program program.

Despite these uncertainties, the source seemed sure of one thing--that he may soon have another photograph of a rescued abductee as a foil to the attack statistics that have accumulated over the years.

The first woman pictured had a sister who was also kidnapped, he said, and her recovery was anticipated soon, along with the arrest of a seventh suspect in the abduction of the two women.

"He's on the water now," he said of the piracy suspect, "but when he comes in, we're going to nail him."

This article was written by Joseph Cerquone.

Update

° Philip N. Hawkes is no longer the director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). On April 14, he was promoted to the position of deputy administrator of the newly created Family Support Administration. Hawkes will have oversight responsibility for ORR and five other programs in the Department of Health and Human Services. Philip Holman is the new acting director of ORR. Holman had been the director of ORR's division of policy and analysis for six years. An ORR spokesperson said that Hawkes would still attempt to attend the upcoming regional consultations, "Refugee Resettlement: A New Decade."

° The Moakley/DeConcini bill (H.R. 822, S. 377) providing for a temporary stay of deportation for Salvadorans in the United States was reported out of the House Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees, and International Law on April 16. Passed by a tie vote, the bill moves to the full Judiciary Committee without recommendation. Two amendments to the bill were also added. The first establishes a November 7, 1985 cut-off date for eligibility for stays of deportation. The second excludes Salvadorans from consideration for federal public assistance benefits and requires them to sign affidavits affirming their intention to return voluntarily to El Salvador upon the lifting of the stay of deportation.

° Asylum seekers fleeing Communist countries will be presumed to have a "well-founded fear of persecution," according to new asylum policy directives being drafted by the Justice Department, according to the March 20 New York Times. The proposed policy would represent a significant departure from the Refugee Act of 1980, which eliminated ideological and geographic restrictions favoring refugees from Communist countries and the Middle East, and which adopted an ideologically neutral standard for asylum consistent with international law.

The Times reported that the change is now in the form of a confidential memorandum awaiting Attorney General Edwin Meese's signature. Meese's aides told the Times that "he found it difficult to accept the view that the refugee law and asylum rules permitted no distinction between aliens fleeing Communist and non-Communist countries." The draft directive includes specific references making it easier for Polish nationals in the United States to be granted asylum.

° The Supreme Court decided on February 24 to resolve conflicts between district courts on the question of whether "a well-founded fear" of persecution--used to determine asylum applications--is the same as the "clear probability" standard for determining whether to withhold deportation.

The appeals courts differ on whether the asylum burden of proof of a well-founded fear of persecution is more lenient than the requirement to establish a clear probability of persecution for withholding of deportation. The Board of Immigration Appeals holds that "as a practical matter," the two standards "converge." The ninth circuit court of appeals maintains that "the term 'clear probability' requires a showing that there is a greater-than-fifty-percent chance of persecution." In contrast, the ninth circuit interprets a "well-founded fear" as being "a substantive fear," needing some objective basis, but that "the likelihood of persecution need not be fifty percent."

The Immigration and Naturalization Service petitioned the Supreme Court to review the decision of the ninth circuit, saying

that Congress did not intend to create two different standards of proof when it passed the Refugee Act of 1980.

Recent Developments

FISH-WILSON AMENDMENT: DEMONSTRATING RESETTLEMENT ALTERNATIVES PROVES DIFFICULT

Passage of the Fish-Wilson amendment in October 1984 was marked by high hopes that it would inspire alternative approaches to refugee resettlement that would reduce refugee dependence on public assistance. Voluntary agencies, in particular, were eager to demonstrate that effective resettlement, resulting in early employment and self-sufficiency for refugees, could be achieved by restructuring the resettlement process.

A year and a half later, no projects inspired by the amendment have been approved. Two states, California and Oregon, have been able to take advantage of Fish-Wilson's authority to implement programs that were already well into the planning stages when the amendment was passed.

The Fish-Wilson amendment authorized the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to fund projects that implement alternative means of providing refugees and entrants with "interim support, medical services, support services, and case management, as needed, in a manner that encourages self-sufficiency, reduces welfare dependency, and fosters greater coordination among the resettlement agencies and service providers."

Sources suggest several reasons that only the two state projects have gone forward. ORR, which funds Fish-Wilson demonstration projects, announced final regulations in June 1985, some eight months after the amendment was passed; the first due date for preliminary applications was July 15.

Project Requirements Hard to Meet The ORR announcement of funds available for projects set forth "pre-application" requirements which were difficult to meet, according to Richard Parkins, ORR director of operations. Demonstration projects are hard to implement, he said, and the pre-application process was designed to protect organizations from making the big investments necessary to develop full proposals for projects with little chance of success.

The pre-application requirements are especially rigorous, Parkins said, because there is no new money available for Fish-Wilson demonstration projects. Instead, funds must come from ORR grants which otherwise would have gone to serve the project participants. Thus, proposals need to show that the projects have sound methodology and will result in savings, especially in terms of cash assistance. Parkins said that the pre-applications ORR has received failed to provide convincing evidence that the proposed projects can have a significant impact.

If there is any disappointment, Parkins said, it is not the lack of applications, but the lack of good, solid ones. He said the weakness had not been in the resettlement concepts proposed, but in the failure to understand the complexity of doing a successful demonstration.

Voluntary Agencies Propose Project The voluntary agencies have been disappointed in the ORR response to a proposal submitted by all of the national agencies for a Fish-Wilson demonstration project in San Diego. The pre-application, submitted for an October 1, 1985, deadline, was not accepted by the ORR review panel. The agencies are redeveloping the proposal to respond to the deficiencies identified by ORR.

Mark Franken of the U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC) said the rejection of the national voluntary agency proposal was disappointing because the agencies had been instrumental in bringing about the Fish-Wilson amendment. "After consistent voluntary agency efforts, through several sessions of Congress, to have language passed that would provide for case management, intensive employment services, and some mechanism for support outside the public welfare system, the agencies have had a vested interest in testing their assumptions." Franken said that to the agencies, the passage of the Fish-Wilson amendment indicated that Congress wanted such a model tested.

The voluntary agency pre-application was turned down, Franken said, because it did not provide enough detail on the impact the project would have on refugee self-sufficiency. He said that ORR's high standards for the pre-application put the voluntary agencies at some disadvantage.

First, Franken said, the agencies had some difficulty gaining access to necessary statistics such as those on refugee public assistance utilization. Also, he said, states can use ORR administrative funds to develop their proposals, while the voluntary agencies have to do it with their own resources. He had hoped that ORR would respond to the agencies' detailed explanation of the proposed service delivery system by approving the concept for further development, but instead, he said, they rejected the pre-application.

Parkins acknowledged that states can more readily obtain the data needed to project cost savings and other program results, but said that ORR will give any data needed for proposals to voluntary agencies. He said that he did not think that any difference in the ease of applying had impeded the private sector from competing for Fish-Wilson grants.

However, the role of the states is crucial, Parkins said. The goal of the Fish-Wilson amendment is reduction of public assistance utilization, and the public assistance system is largely defined by states, he said. Thus, the states are needed to address welfare dependence. "You can argue that it can be changed only with state involvement." In fact, ORR has required applicants other than state governments to consult and cooperate closely with their states.

Cash Assistance Control an Issue The role to be played by the state has been a key issue in the development of the voluntary agency proposal for a San Diego demonstration project. The agencies chose a California site, according to Franken, because "California, with its high rate of welfare dependency, is obviously a high priority for Fish-Wilson's attempt to attack the welfare system and develop alternatives."

A major component of the voluntary agencies' proposed resettlement plan was agency control of cash assistance to refugees. According to Franken, if the resettlement agencies have adequate resources to support refugees for six months without contact with the public assistance system, earlier employment can be achieved. But the state of California, he said, would not agree to a system where the voluntary agencies administer cash assistance.

Walter Barnes, chief of refugee services for the state of California, said that he is not opposed to giving the voluntary agencies responsibility for an alternative cash payment system, but that to actually change how cash assistance is paid would require legislation. He said he has told the agencies that getting legislative approval and setting up a new payment system would take a long time.

Franken said that doing the demonstration project without voluntary agency control of cash assistance would mean not testing the service delivery system that the agencies think is most effective. Nevertheless, because the agencies still want to focus on California, Franken said, they are willing to submit a compromise proposal if the voluntary agencies can have "enough case management authority to affect the eligibility of refugees for cash assistance."

An understanding is needed between the voluntary agencies and the state that the public assistance system and service provision must respect, not conflict with, the refugee's employment plan, said Wells Klein, executive director of the American Council for Nationalities Service and chairman of InterAction's subcommittee on refugee resettlement.

Barnes said that discussions about a resubmission of the San Diego application were continuing and that the state would be able to cooperate with the agencies on the model being considered now.

Ron Curtin of the World Relief affiliate and chairman of the voluntary agency committee in San Diego said there is a legitimate legislative problem in getting the cash payment system changed. He said the agencies must be realistic and propose something that the state can agree to and that ORR could fund. "What's reasonable is to do step one now--more intensive involvement with resettlement," Curtin said.

Proposal Emphasizes Case Management According to Curtin, that intensive involvement is the essential element of the proposed San Diego project--making each voluntary agency office a central intake unit responsible for services that help the refugee toward economic and social independence. Such involvement entails a required resettlement plan, regular meetings, and a consistent message stressing early

employment and the upgrading of skills after placement.

Franken agreed that case management is the centerpiece of the project. He said that the voluntary agency would have authority to develop an appropriate service plan to bring family members to early employment. While the idea sounds simple, Franken said, it is rather novel in refugee resettlement, which has been fragmented, with authority spread among various service providers.

The principles of the demonstration project are almost identical to those in a Chicago demonstration project undertaken by the resettlement agencies there in 1985, Franken said (see Refugee Reports, Vol. VI, No. 1). In addition to case management, the other main components are employment services, medical insurance not tied to cash assistance, income maintenance that precludes access to public assistance, and program evaluation.

The main difference from the Chicago project, according to Franken, is building in a solid evaluation system from the beginning of the project to allow sound conclusions about results.

Extensive Cooperation Required Franken said that the cooperation among the national voluntary agencies to develop a Fish-Wilson application, and their agreement on an effective resettlement service model, was unprecedented. "It's been a good exercise," Franken said. "We've identified much commonality about what is viewed as good resettlement."

Curtin called the Fish-Wilson proposal development process a "real eye opener," as it involved working with all agencies, each with different concerns. "You have to get the national agencies, the local affiliates, mutual assistance associations, county government, state government, and the federal government--some of whom have vested interests in the system not changing--to agree," Curtin said. "That's been frustrating."

Locally, Curtin added, there have been some differences of opinion due to the effects the project will have on agencies because of their size and different client populations. He said that the small agencies will have a more difficult time with the project. But he added that there has been basic agreement that the model is best for the refugees and a spirit of cooperation, with the large agencies offering help to the smaller ones.

Though all the national voluntary agencies are cooperating on the proposed project, the agencies involved in resettlement in San Diego are World Relief, USCC, the International Rescue Committee, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Church World Service, and the Presiding Bishops Fund of the Episcopal Church.

Klein also described the difficulties associated with the Fish-Wilson proposal. "We have a complex refugee resettlement system that varies from state to state, agency to agency, with two federal funding sources --a system that has evolved, not one that anyone would have designed," he said. "That system has developed inertia. Fish-Wilson calls for change, and systems are not easy to change, especially with a variety of actors and vested interests."

Klein added that there is apprehension in the refugee community about the Fish-Wilson proposals because some do narrow refugees' options and provide sanctions for not accepting employment.

San Diego MAAs Developing Project Curtin said that the mutual assistance associations (MAAs) in San Diego, though submitting a proposal of their own, were supportive of the voluntary agencies' proposal. He said that the MAAs would prefer to do a demonstration project themselves, but if the voluntary agencies do it, they will cooperate.

The San Diego MAAs have submitted a pre-application for a Fish-Wilson project, according to Cuong Ngo-anh, founder of the Vietnamese Federation of San Diego and the Indochinese Mutual Assistance Association of San Diego, a coalition of MAAs. But, Cuong said, the proposal received no support from the voluntary agencies and other service providers, and their pre-application was rejected by ORR.

Cuong said that the Indochinese Mutual Assistance Association sent a letter to the voluntary agencies saying that if they developed a project, "we would support them." He said it was sent because it is the tradition for the refugees to follow the agencies. "Everything is controlled by the voluntary agencies," Cuong said. "They are our bosses. Most of the active MAA leaders work for volags. We have to support them."

But Cuong said the MAAs do not, in fact,

support the voluntary agency proposal. "Their proposal is just the old ingredients, with a little hot sauce added," he said. "That's not a demonstration project."

Private Sector Work Experience Proposed

The MAA proposal, according to Cuong, was innovative and unique, establishing a "production training unit," in which all employable refugees would be placed as soon as they arrive. Cuong said the project had already lined up 74 contracts with private corporations to provide them with refugee workers for positions requiring a wide range of skills.

Refugees would receive orientation and training while working in these positions for three months, he said. "Then, with real work on their resume, they would go out and find jobs and be ready for self-sufficiency." He added that the project itself would be self-sufficient with the fees paid by the employers supporting the program. The proposal requested $1 million the first year and none the second year, with the $1 million to be returned to the federal government once the production unit generates income, he said.

Cuong said the project had the support of the San Diego MAAs, MAAs in other parts of the United States, the San Diego Urban League, the San Diego Association of Government, the mayor, California's U.S. senators and several members of Congress, and the 74 private companies already with contracts. "It was rejected, though, because it is not the traditional service providers."

The San Diego MAAs will submit another application, modified somewhat to gain the state's cooperation, according to Cuong. He said that Fish-Wilson was a chance for the MAAs to be involved in resettlement, but that it seems they will not get that chance.

California RDP Changes Cash Assistance

To some extent, sources indicated, the state of California's hesitancy about the voluntary agency proposal stems from concern about the success of the state's own Fish-Wilson project, the refugee demonstration project (RDP). The ORR announcement does not prohibit more than one project in a state. Curtin said the San Diego project would work within the constraints of the RDP and would enhance rather than damage it.

The RDP, which began on July 1, 1985, is a three-year project which seeks to remove barriers to employment caused by public cash assistance, according to state refugee program chief Barnes. By transferring refugees normally eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to the RDP, Barnes said, the primary wage earner in a refugee family can be required to work or participate in training in order for the family to receive cash assistance.

Under the AFDC-unemployment program, which provides cash assistance for most California refugees, Barnes said, the employment of the primary worker for more than 100 hours a week made the family ineligible. Most refugees, especially more recent arrivals, have low education and employment skills levels which limit them to jobs that do not provide enough income to maintain the family, Barnes said.

RDP allows refugees to take minimum wage jobs without being penalized by loss of their cash assistance grant and medical assistance. Instead, they receive supplements which bring their incomes up to the level of their AFDC grants. If employable refugees refuse to participate, without good cause, Barnes said, they can be sanctioned by partial loss of the cash grant.

Of approximately 350,000 refugees in California, 270,000 of whom receive some form of public assistance, only those who are AFDC recipients and in their first 30 months of eligibility for federal refugee assistance are in the RDP, according to Barnes. New arrivals and secondary migrants enter the program. He said there were some 37,000 in the program as of December 31.

While this is a small portion of the California refugee population, Barnes said, refugees not eligible for the RDP, or those who finish it without achieving self-sufficiency, will now go into California's new GAIN program, Greater Avenues for Independence, which applies to all AFDC recipients, including refugees. It establishes a program, like RDP, which requires AFDC recipients to participate in an employment services program.

Early Results Sketchy It is too early for any definitive results, Barnes said, but there has been some increase in job placements, word-of-mouth reports that secondary migration to California is decreasing, and some indication that RDP primary earners

are entering the job market.

There has also been a slight reduction in refugee cash assistance utilization rates in California, Barnes said, from 85.4 percent in September 1984 to 81 percent in September 1985, with most of the decrease in the last quarter of that year when the RDP was implemented. But Barnes warned that many other relevant factors were present during that period so that the decline cannot be attributed to any one thing.

Sources agreed that the California RDP is not a true Fish-Wilson demonstration project, but used the amendment's authority to achieve something that was needed. Franken said any lowering of refugee public assistance use in California is significant, but that the results achieved by the RDP do not surprise him. "It's nothing innovative," Franken said. "It just put teeth in the existing welfare system."

Oregon Fish-Wilson Project Underway Oregon started a project under the Fish-Wilson authority in September 1985. The Refugee Early Employment Project features close cooperation among three primary refugee service providers, an emphasis on employment, the replacement of cash assistance payments with a combination of cash support and cash incentives, and provision of medical coverage that will continue even after a refugee is employed, said Ron Spendal, Oregon state refugee coordinator.

The program is being carried out in Portland's three-county area, where 82 percent of the state's refugees live.

Once newly arrived refugees are determined to be employable, Spendahl said, they meet with the case manager from the voluntary agency, a representative of the International Refugee Center of Oregon (a coalition of MAAs which provides employment services), and a representative of the three community colleges who provide English-as-a-second-language instruction. The refugee and the three service providers agree upon an individualized action plan designed to lead to self-sufficiency, Spendal said.

The level of cash support is calculated to be comparable to the public assistance level, but each refugee also receives an attendance incentive for participating in training, according to Spendal.

He said the key to the program is the focus on employment. "Everything else is subordinate to employment." The demonstration has wide support, Spendal said, because of the clear, consistent message given the refugees by all the providers at the same time--that employment comes first.

One aspect of the emphasis on employment is the ability to provide direct, immediate sanctions to refugees who refuse to participate. Spendal said that the refusal to participate would be discussed with the refugee, and then a series of escalating sanctions would be imposed.

Computers Used Spendal said the refugee community and MAA leaders feel the program is better than previous resettlement because of the medical program and the incentives which give them the sense that they are achieving for themselves, not simply receiving a handout.

An interesting aspect of the Oregon project is a data base managed by the Center for Urban Education, which is under contract to manage the demonstration project and train those involved in it. The center has provided technical assistance, including a data base, for the Oregon refugee program since 1981, but the data system has been upgraded for the project. Now there is an electronic file for each refugee participant, Spendal said, and all service providers have computer terminals on which they can examine files and update those for which they are responsible.

While it is early for meaningful results, Spendal said, some impressions are possible. The number of arrivals is lower than expected, but a higher percentage of arrivals are employable refugees and, thus, entering the project. The number of refugees placed in jobs and the number retaining jobs after 90 days, while still low, are ahead of expectations, he said.

Franken said that although the Oregon project was developed prior to passage of the Fish-Wilson amendment, it represents much of what the national voluntary agencies are interested in. However, he said, because of the shared case management authority, he feels there is an unnecessary level of complexity and bureaucracy. Franken also said that the high level of cooperation involved may be unique to Oregon's circumstances and would make the project difficult to replicate elsewhere.

Massachusetts Developing Proposal The state of Massachusetts has submitted a pre-application for a Fish-Wilson project and received approval to continue planning, according to Tom Ford, coordinator of program planning and evaluation in the state's office of refugee resettlement. He said the proposal is being substantially redesigned, but that ORR was receptive to its basic concepts.

The Massachusetts project would treat the whole program "exactly like a job, with the same expectations," Ford said. An employable refugee's assessed need level, which would be at least equal to the refugee cash assistance level, would be converted to an hourly wage which the refugee would receive for a combination of work experience, on-the-job training, and other appropriate training equalling a 40-hour week. Unlike public assistance, Ford said, any absence without a good reason would result in pay being docked.

Funds for the wages would come from program funds and the private sector, according to Ford. The refugee program is working with the state's Job Training Partnership Act office to plan the program and develop a network of private sector work-experience sites, Ford said. "The refugee program will contract with companies for a fee and, by using a job-sharing approach, will commit to keeping a certain number of low-wage, high-turnover positions filled," he said.

Program Would Introduce Refugees to Work Environment The refugees might think of the training placements as "dead-end" jobs that they would not take as regular, permanent employment, Ford said. They are designed, though, to introduce the refugees to the work environment instead of the welfare system. Ford said that the perceptual difference between welfare and earning was important. "The concept is to get the refugees involved in experience that looks and feels like work, not welfare, from the first day they receive assistance, so they are self-sufficient and don't have to make an adjustment to work." Thus, eligibility determination would take place in a service provider's office, not a state welfare department, and would be run "almost like a temporary employment agency."

Like other proposed Fish-Wilson projects, the Massachusetts version would separate medical assistance from cash assistance, and refugees would continue to receive coverage until employment insurance begins. In fact, Ford said, the lack of health insurance is seen as such a barrier to employment that in project planning, a placement without health insurance is not considered an acceptable outcome.

The project would work through the voluntary agencies, who would have contracts to carry out an expanded needs assessment for each refugee. This would determine the appropriate services and training each refugee needs to achieve self-sufficiency. Ford stressed that the model would include some on-the-job training. "The refugee can't be idle, waiting for the right training program."

RETURNING TO PROFESSIONS POSES CHALLENGE FOR REFUGEES

She is Ethiopian, a refugee, and unemployed.

"I feel really bad," she says of her four-month search for a job. "It's frustrating."

Her situation may sound typical in that refugees are regarded by some to be job-market liabilities who draw assistance in order to survive. Currently, 55 percent of all refugees in the United States less than three years receive some form of federal support, according to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

Yet, this Ethiopian is another story. Highly educated--she was a lawyer in her native country--she is conducting a selective job search that she hopes will reap work appropriate to her background.

"I told myself to wait," she says of her search strategy. She receives no assistance, and relies for now on her husband's income. She adds, "If need be, I'll take anything."

It remains to be seen whether or not this hunt for the right job will end well. Sources indicate, though, that many former professionals who have arrived recently as refugees in the United States--significant numbers of Ethiopians, Afghans, Iranians, Soviet Jews, and other Eastern Europeans, for the most part--face uphill battles trying to resume their careers.

Some do return to professions, but such

success stories are difficult to achieve. Several factors hold these refugees back, and the national policy goal of early employment for refugees through entry-level jobs is not a realistic solution to their predicaments, sources indicate.

According to one resettlement director caring for Afghans in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, the early-employment policy and former professionals are a stark mismatch: "They clash," she says pointedly.

Loss of Status Takes Emotional Toll

Former professionals suffer perhaps the most dramatic changes in status among refugees.

"They experience severe downward mobility and are left devastated and confused," says Lucia Ann McSpadden, an anthropologist and resettlement worker in San Francisco. "In their home countries, they would be in positions of influence."

The plunge can have several dimensions. One of the Ethiopians McSpadden has studied for the past two years was tangled in cultural misunderstanding--he mistakenly injected questions of morality into his inability to improve his job situation.

The man kept saying, "I am a good man. I must have a good job," McSpadden remembers.

She says that Ethiopians are especially vulnerable to disillusionment because, more than other refugees, many are single men without family support to fall back on.

But problems are not confined to them, either. Many Afghans are seen as being reluctant to take menial jobs after spending years in government posts in Afghanistan.

"[A] considerable number view welfare as a way to avoid a job which they see as beneath them," says Afghan Refugees: Five Years Later, a 1985 report by the U.S. Committee for Refugees.

One job counselor, a former Vietnamese army officer, says that refugees need to cast such feelings aside and start at the bottom. He did three years ago, and there have been payoffs--he currently owns a townhouse, for instance. But it was bought with money earned from Herculean labor--60 years old, the Vietnamese puts in an 80-hour work week. That grind, he confesses, "is terrible for me."

For her part, the Ethiopian lawyer says that taking just any work right away won't do.

"I found it boring and unfulfilling," she says of a job she had as a cashier in Boston.

According to the 1985 World Refugee Report of the U.S. State Department, over 5,000 Ethiopians were resettled or granted asylum by the United States in 1983 and 1984. Meanwhile, refugees from the Middle East and South Asia totalled nearly 26,000, as did Eastern Europeans. The Eastern European sum includes nearly 2,000 Soviet Jews.

Resuming Some Professions Means Overcoming Difficult Obstacles To some extent, the kind of career a refugee may have had determines whether he can return to it in this country. Polish engineers resettled in California recently needed only vocational English to obtain commensurate American jobs, as their education and experience proved adequate.

But more difficult transitions challenge others. Lawyers must start from scratch if they want to re-enter their profession, and doctors can face requirements that seem insurmountable.

The situation of Soviet Jewish doctors in Massachusetts illustrates some of the pitfalls. Reportedly fearing that the state was becoming a magnet for foreign doctors, officials began in September 1984 to require foreign-trained medical graduates to spend two years at residencies in order to be licensed. Because such positions are in short supply, the change upset many refugee physicians who hoped to practice once again.

The Boston area alone is reported to have 35-40 Soviet Jews who were trained as physicians in the Soviet Union; as many as 225 such doctors are said to be "unemployed or underemployed" nationwide.

"Refugees were left nowhere," resettlement coordinator Shelley Meyerson says of the effect of the state action. Eventually, Meyerson and others pressured Massachusetts to waive the requirement; guidelines for a substitute training scheme have yet to be issued.

Retraining Medical Professionals Tried

The United States has helped get some careers back on track. In the late 1970s, federal programs assisted the training of Southeast Asian doctors and dentists who

came in the first waves of Indochinese refugees. But that was before refugee admissions escalated, and when budget dollars were more plentiful. Nearly a decade later, officials worry less about professionals, and more about uneducated and unskilled refugees who are thought to be most dependent on welfare.

"It's a question of priorities," observes ORR director Phillip Hawkes.

This outlook partly reflects the notion that training or retraining former professionals is a risky business. The last major effort by ORR to provide direct help to former professionals--an 18-month demonstration project funded for $500,000 in 1983--has not produced satisfactory results, according to officials.

Stymied by English-language difficulties, only 2 of 11 Hmong and Lao candidates from one of five programs funded under the project passed a state exam for licensed practical nurses. The result is said to be typical.

"Our theory was that refugees with nursing experience would do better," explains an ORR official about the way people were screened for the program. "But we actually needed to look for people with English skills."

"We've learned that these projects are not worthwhile," the official adds.

Training Bilingual Counselors Proves Successful Some programs are described positively, though, especially those that take former professionals and train them to fulfill a critical social-services need--serving as bilingual and bicultural counselors.

Jean, a Haitian who abandoned a life as a social work student and accountant when he left Haiti in 1981, is a product of one such program run by Adelphi University in New York City.

At first, Jean took menial jobs, telling himself that he needed "to start somewhere." But he had trouble; one restauranteur fired him.

"He told me I couldn't speak English," the Haitian recalls, "but I think he feared that I had AIDS."

Today, Jean is doing well. A counselor in a foster home, he is studying for a masters degree in social work at Adelphi. Though he says he still believes that refugees--professionals and nonprofessionals alike--need to get into the work force quickly and any way possible, he admits that his youth, knowledge of English, and the advice of friends who wrote to him from the United States about life in America before he left Haiti helped him greatly.

"I had no big expectations," Jean says of his attitude when he arrived.

The forewarning that Jean received isn't available to many of the professionals who have been arriving in recent years, however, and its absence concerns some observers. The USCR report on Afghans recommends English-language instruction and orientation, similar to that now provided to Southeast Asians prior to U.S. resettlement. According to one source, the State Department proposed such a program in 1984, but the Office of the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs vetoed the measure. Information about the proposal was not available from the coordinator's office, but a spokesman there indicated that language and orientation programs for refugee groups with large numbers of professionals were not expected.

"With Gramm-Rudman hanging like the sword of Damocles, there's no new impetus for development," he said.

Proposed ORR Regulations Address Training for Relicensing The outlook is not entirely bleak. New regulations proposed in January by ORR would lessen the opportunities for refugees receiving federal aid to substitute education or training for job searches, but would allow professionals to study or train as part of their "employability plan." The proposed regulations state that such training can be substituted for job searches if it is "specifically intended to assist the professional in becoming relicensed in his or her profession, and..., if completed, can realistically be expected to result in such relicensing."

The proposed regulations are, however, part of an ever-tightening budget picture that could affect programs that aid professionals but are not designed specifically for them.

McSpadden says a mix of training and working is needed if former professionals are not going to be overcome with despair.

"If they can put together a plan that includes schooling, they may take less than desirable jobs," she says. Another source speculates that the tighter regulations may

change some stubborn attitudes among former professionals about taking entry-level jobs, while still others suggest that community colleges and voluntary agencies need to develop better employment counseling programs for these refugees.

"There will be big payoffs in the long-run," said Sophie Wojciechowski, a professor in the Adelphi School of Social Work, of the economic and social benefits well-trained professionals will offer society. "I'm not saying that we should help them only," she adds. "But to have them doing things like sweeping floors is a waste of talent."

By Joseph Cerquone.

Projects and Programs

PROGRAM TRAINS REFUGEE MOTHERS IN DAY CARE MANAGEMENT

Cambodian refugee women are learning day care management under the auspices of Lutheran Social Services in Jacksonville, Florida. The national demonstration project has been funded by ACTION's office of Volunteer Initiatives to develop a curriculum for teaching child care in the American environment to mostly illiterate women with little or no formal education and low English-language proficiency.

Day Care Project participants visit hospital maternity room. Lutheran Social Services.

The Parenting Skills Training Project presents one answer to the finding of a recent Refugee Policy Group study, Adaptation and Integration of Recent Refugees to the United States (see Refugee Reports, Vol. VII, No. 3), that since "most refugee households need more than one employed person to pull themselves out of dependency," one of the greatest needs of refugee communities is for "day care facilities to permit more mothers to enter the labor force." Training refugee women in day care skills would accomplish dual purposes of employing some hard-to-place refugee women directly in the day care field, while allowing other mothers to seek employment elsewhere.

The Jacksonville program evolved from a volunteer babysitting service for women attending ESL classes. "It became evident," said Jerry C. Klein, program director of Lutheran Refugee Services of Northeast Florida, "that many of these women were ill-equipped to care for the children in the dramatically new environment." He said that most of the Cambodian women came out of a rural environment of war and hardship before being "plunked down here." They generally lacked basic knowledge of Western safety and health standards.

Training Emphasizes Health and Safety Although the primary goal of the Lutheran refugee and entrant services program is early economic self-sufficiency, Klein said that a more immediate concern became "preventing disasters in the care of children." Cultural orientation is featured in the training, including lessons identifying potential dangers in the American household with which refugees are unfamiliar. These include the hazards of household cleaning items as potential poisons and bathtubs as a source of drownings, as well as hazards associated with stoves, kerosene heaters, and electrical cords and appliances.

Other segments of the training program include child growth and development, hygiene and nutrition, home management (shopping and budgeting, meal planning), and state and local rules governing child care (including day care licensing and certification requirements).

Klein maintains that the program has positive employment-related ramifications, even for those mothers who do not acquire employment in the day care field. "There is a long-term benefit that will help Cambodian parents prepare their children so they do not lag behind when they enter school." Klein said that the program could help to reverse the high drop-out rate he sees among Cambodian high school students.

The project uses a team approach with an English-language specialist, translator, and volunteer professionals from the surrounding areas. Two of the nurses involved in the program as volunteers, Judith Rosenberg and Susan Givens, recently wrote an article about their experience in the 12-week course. They described the teaching of such skills as the use of a thermometer.

Rosenberg and Givens recognized their own cultural inexperience with Cambodian health concepts and practices, and wrote that their exclusive reliance on Western principles of treatment might have resulted in student rejection of class material. They recommend that future efforts involve "cultural negotiation"--to allow for "comparison between the Khmer's perceptions about illness and the Western health care system's interpretation of the same clinical phenomena."

Program Enters Second Year Forty women and approximately seventy-five children participated in the first year of the program. The second year of the program, which began in January, will involve sixty women and one hundred children.

During the first year, babysitting services were provided in order to allow mothers to take classes. During 1986, the emphasis will be placed on wedding the skills training to a full-curriculum day care program. "The parents will be on site and able to intern in the day care as well as see and participate in the development of their children," according to Klein.

Program administrators are seeking funds for the day care center, which they hope to subsidize with Title XX monies available for the care of children whose eligible parents are enrolled in 20 hours or more of training. The program also recently received a boost by being named one of ten exemplary programs in Florida for adult education by the Adult County Education Network.

Resources

SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES' RESETTLEMENT PROBLEMS ANALYZED IN SAN DIEGO STUDY

Problems associated with Southeast Asian refugee resettlement are analyzed by Paul J. Strand and Woodrow Jones, Jr. in Indochinese Refugees in America: Problems of Adaptation and Assimilation.

The book is based on a survey of 800 Southeast Asian refugee heads of households in the San Diego area. The study found the average age of the primary economic supporters of the family to be 37 years. Household size--an average of 6.02 members--was found to be quite high by American standards.

Poverty continues to be a problem for the refugees. The authors found that even the higher income households tend to fall below the poverty level due to the large family size.

The study found that the educational background of refugees in their home country was the leading indicator for successful adaptation to life in the U.S. Native literacy was found to give a decided edge to refugee proficiency in English as a second language, which, in turn, had significant bearing on finding employment.

The authors caution against comparing Southeast Asian refugees with other immigrant groups. "Employment and self-sufficiency are particularly troublesome issues for Indochinese refugees," they write, "as they do not come to the U.S. to market skills that are supported by the U.S. economy. They came to escape persecution."

The 182-page clothbound volume is available for $32.50 from Duke University Press, 6697 College Station, Durham, NC 27708.

ASYLUM CASES FILED WITH DISTRICT DIRECTORS
FY 86 AS OF FEBRUARY 1986

NATIONALITY*	Received to date	Granted to date	Denied to date	Pending End of FY 86	NATIONALITY*	Received to date	Granted to date	Denied to date	Pending End of FY 86
TOTAL	7,282	1,412	2,044	110,539					
AFGHANISTAN	64	23	35	61	LIBERIA	19	1	6	21
CHINA (PEOPLE'S REP.)	15	11	5	27	LIBYA	30	7	10	47
CUBA	1,024	5	115	100,603	NICARAGUA	2,832	367	238	3,624
CZECHOSLOVAKIA	32	9	7	37	NIGERIA	2	0	6	10
EGYPT	19	0	7	26	PAKISTAN	32	0	17	41
EL SALVADOR	727	30	366	731	PHILIPPINES	24	8	22	37
ETHIOPIA	158	74	90	134	POLAND	405	205	169	246
GHANA	11	3	11	11	ROMANIA	70	61	30	44
GUATEMALA	199	2	80	216	SIERRA LEONE	0	0	0	12
HAITI	72	2	55	3,130	SOMALIA	32	6	18	31
HONDURAS	46	0	7	77	SOUTH AFRICA	21	3	11	28
HUNGARY	37	14	5	41	SRI LANKA	15	0	13	28
INDIA	61	0	45	54	SYRIA	43	19	22	58
IRAN	967	507	394	736	USSR	15	19	9	13
IRAQ	28	5	14	37	UGANDA	16	4	21	40
LAOS	9	0	5	11	VIETNAM	6	6	4	10
LEBANON	89	0	125	100	YUGOSLAVIA	64	4	22	52

* Nationalities with fewer than 10 applications pending are omitted from this chart but are reflected in the total.

Note: Cuban asylum applicants who are adjusting to lawful permanent resident status under the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 are listed by INS as cases otherwise closed.
This chart is based on data for asylum cases filed with INS district directors only. Many applications for asylum are filed with immigration judges, particularly in the context of deportation proceedings. The Office of the Chief Immigration Judge is developing a data system, but asylum statistics are not now available.

Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service

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